

VZCZCXRO9232
PP RUEHFK RUEHKSO RUEHNAG RUEHNH
DE RUEHKO #4830/01 2352309
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 232309Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5665
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/USDOJ WASHDC PRIORITY
RULSDMK/USDOT WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J5//
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHHMHBA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI
RHMFIUU/HQ PACAF HICKAM AFB HI//CC/PA//
RHMFIUU/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA//J5/JO21//
RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA
RUAYJAA/COMPATWING ONE KAMI SEYA JA
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 0335
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 7766
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 1100
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 7578
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 8876
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3877
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0009
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1699

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 13 TOKYO 004830

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR E, P, EB, EAP/J, EAP/P, EAP/PD, PA
WHITE HOUSE/NSC/NEC; JUSTICE FOR STU CHEMTOB IN ANTI-TRUST DIVISION;
TREASURY/OASIA/IMI/JAPAN; DEPT PASS USTR/PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
SECDEF FOR JCS-J-5/JAPAN,
DASD/ISA/EAPR/JAPAN; DEPT PASS ELECTRONICALLY TO USDA
FAS/ITP FOR SCHROETER; PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR;
CINCPAC FLT/PA/ COMNAVFORJAPAN/PA.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 08/23/06

INDEX:

- (1) Poll on Koizumi cabinet, political parties, post-Koizumi race, Yasukuni homage, consumption tax, US beef
- (2) Poll on Koizumi cabinet, political parties, Yasukuni Shrine
- (3) Poll on Koizumi cabinet, political parties, Yasukuni Shrine
- (4) Discussing the 2006 LDP presidential election with Koichi Kato
- (5) DPJ's Okada restarts
- (6) Crime syndicate smuggles in M16, AK47, grenades to arm itself with military-level weapons
- (7) Russia fires at Japanese fishing boat in violation of secret accord with Japan on safe fishing operations

ARTICLES:

- (1) Poll on Koizumi cabinet, political parties, post-Koizumi race, Yasukuni homage, consumption tax, US beef

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
August 22, 2006

Questions & Answers
(Figures shown in %age, rounded off.)

Q: Do you support the Koizumi cabinet?

Yes	42.8	(43.2)
No	40.1	(40.4)
Don't know (D/K) + Can't say which (CSW)	17.2	(16.4)

Q: Which political party do you support?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	40.0	(40.3)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto)	16.5	(19.1)
New Komeito (NK)	3.8	(4.0)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP)	2.3	(2.8)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto)	2.1	(1.7)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto)	0.2	(0.2)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon)	0.1	(0.1)
New Party Daichi (NPD or Shinto Daichi)	0	(0.1)
Other answers (O/A)	0.7	(0.9)
None	33.2	(28.5)
D/K + Can't say (C/S)	1.4	(2.5)

Q: Who do you think is most appropriate for post-Koizumi leadership?

Taro Aso	6.7	(5.6)
Shinzo Abe	46.9	(45.6)
Sadakazu Tanigaki	9.4	(9.3)
O/A	8.4	(11.2)
None	21.5	(---)
D/K+C/S	7.3	(15.8)

Q: Who would you like to become the next LDP president?

Taro Aso	2.9
----------	-----

TOKYO 00004830 002 OF 013

Shinzo Abe	75.6
Sadakazu Tanigaki	1.7
O/A	2.0
D/K+C/S	18.0

Q: What do you think will be the primary point at issue in the post-Koizumi race?

Foreign policy, national security	19.9	(18.8)
Economic disparities	13.3	(16.5)
Economic policy	11.6	(14.2)
Consumption tax, other tax issues	9.6	(---)
Administrative reforms	6.4	(---)
Pension, other social security systems	19.9	(25.0)
Education, low birthrate	5.2	(8.3)
Yasukuni Shrine	4.2	(---)
O/A	4.7	(4.3)
D/K+C/S	5.4	(3.3)

Q: Which one do you think is appropriate for prime minister between Abe, who is said to be the most likely post-Koizumi candidate, and DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa?

Abe	58.7	(58.1)
Ozawa	25.2	(25.7)
D/K+CSW	16.1	(16.3)

Q: Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi paid homage at Yasukuni Shrine on Aug. 15. Do you support it?

Yes	41.4
No	44.6
D/K+CSW	14.1

Q: (Only for those who answered "yes") Why? Pick only one.

Because he kept his word	10.3
--------------------------	------

Because he showed a resolute attitude to foreign countries	23.8
--	------

Because he mourned for war victims
62.4
Because I support the prime minister
2.1
D/K+C/S
1.5

Q: (Only for those who answered "no") Why? Pick only one.

Because he was inconsiderate of foreign relations
50.3
Because Class-A war criminals are also enshrined at Yasukuni Shrine
25.1
Because the sitting prime minister should not pay homage at Yasukuni Shrine
14.8
Because I don't support the prime minister
5.9
D/K+C/S
3.8

TOKYO 00004830 003 OF 013

Q: Do you think the next prime minister should pay homage at Yasukuni Shrine?

Yes	26.9	(22.9)
No	47.4	(57.0)
D/K+CSW	25.7	(20.2)

Q: Do you appreciate the Koizumi cabinet's policies over the past five years and a half?

Foreign, security policies
Yes 39.2
No 43.3
D/K+CSW 17.5

Economic policies
Yes 34.5
No 48.8
D/K+CSW 16.7

Administrative, fiscal reforms
Yes 39.5
No 39.2
D/K+CSW 21.3

Social security policies
Yes 16.5
No 64.9
D/K+CSW 18.6

Political approach
Yes 45.0
No 36.6
D/K+CSW 18.5

Administration on the whole
Yes 52.9
No 36.0
D/K+CSW 11.2

Q: Do you think it would be unavoidable to raise the consumption tax for fiscal reconstruction and other purposes?

Yes	57.8
No	36.0
D/K+CSW	6.3

Q: Do you support the idea of using the consumption tax for social security?

Yes	60.8
No	27.4

D/K+CSW 11.9

Q: If the consumption tax were to be raised in the future, to what extent would it be acceptable?

Up to 7%	36.7
Up to 10%	39.1
Up to 15%	4.7
Over 15%	1.6
Unacceptable	15.7
D/K+C/S	2.3

TOKYO 00004830 004 OF 013

Q: The government has resumed US beef imports. Would you like to eat US beef?

Yes	16.1	(13.2)
Will wait and see	19.6	(23.3)
No	62.1	(61.3)
D/K+C/S	2.3	(2.3)

Q: Do you think you are one of the so-called unaffiliated voting population?

Yes	58.2
No	36.6
D/K+CSW	5.3

(Note) Parentheses denote the results of an FNN survey conducted July 29-30.

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted by the Sankei Shimbun and Fuji News Network (FNN) on Aug. 19-20 over the telephone on a computer-aided random digit dialing (RDD) basis. For the survey, a total of 2,000 persons were sampled from among males and females, aged 20 and over, across the nation.

(2) Poll on Koizumi cabinet, political parties, Yasukuni Shrine

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
August 7, 2006

Questions & Answers

(T = total; P = previous; M = male; F = female)

Q: Do you support the Koizumi cabinet?

	T	P	M	F
Yes	45	(44)	44	46
No	37	(40)	39	35
Not interested	16	(15)	16	17

Q: (Only for those who answered "yes" to the above question) Why?

	T	P	M	F
Because the prime minister is from the Liberal Democratic Party	12	(12)	14	11
Because something can be expected of Prime Minister Koizumi's leadership	29	(27)	27	30
Because new policy measures can be expected	12	(16)	8	14
Because the nature of politics is likely to change	45	(41)	49	42

Q: (Only for those who answered "no" to the above question) Why?

	T	P	M	F
Because the prime minister is from the Liberal Democratic Party	10	(8)	11	9
Because the prime minister compromises too much with the ruling parties	15	(15)	18	13

Because I can't feel there is an economic recovery

55 (57) 51 58

Because the prime minister is reluctant to take action against political scandals

11 (12) 11 12

Q: Which political party do you support?

	T	P	M	F
Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)				
32 (31)		33	31	
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto)				
17 (19)		20	15	
New Komeito (NK)				
5 (4)		5	5	
Japanese Communist Party (JCP)				
4 (3)		4	3	
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto)				
2 (2)		2	3	
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto)				
0 (0)		0	--	
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon)				
-- (--)		--	--	
Other parties				
0 (1)		0	1	
None				
37 (38)		34	40	

Q: Prime Minister Koizumi visited Yasukuni Shrine on Aug. 15, the anniversary of the end of World War II. Do you support this?

	T	P	M	F
Yes	50		49	50
No	46		48	45

Q: (Only for those who answered "yes") Why?

	T	P	M	F
Because he fulfilled his public pledge when he came into office as prime minister				
13 12 14				
The prime minister's shrine visit is needed to mourn the war dead				
54 49 58				
Because he didn't cave in to pressure from China and South Korea				
31 37 27				

Q: (Only for those who answered "no") Why?

	T	P	M	F
He was inconsiderate of China and South Korea				
42 39 44				
He went against the constitutional separation of religion and state				
15 18 13				
It's inappropriate for the prime minister to visit the shrine where Class-A war criminals are enshrined				
39 38 39				

Q: Would you like the next prime minister to visit Yasukuni Shrine as well?

	T	P	M	F
Yes	42	(33)	41	43
No	47	(54)	51	45

Q: Do you support the idea of unenshrining Class-A war criminals from Yasukuni to separate them from the war dead enshrined there?

	T	P	M	F
Yes	62	(63)	63	61
No	24	(23)	27	22

Q: Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe visited Yasukuni Shrine on April 15 this year. Do you support this?

	T	P	M	F
Yes	43		41	45
No	47		50	45

(Note) Figures shown in%age, rounded off. "0" indicates that the figure was below 0.5%. "--" denotes that no respondents answered. "No answer" omitted. Parentheses denote the results of the last survey conducted July 22-23.

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted Aug. 15-16 over the telephone with the aim of calling a total of 1,000 voters across the nation on a computer-aided random digit sampling (RDS) basis. Answers were obtained from 1,051 persons.

(3) Poll on Koizumi cabinet, political parties, Yasukuni Shrine

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
August 17, 2006

Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in%age. Parentheses denote the results of the last survey conducted July 7-8.)

Q: Do you support the Koizumi cabinet?

Yes	49.2	(46.8)
No	39.5	(41.8)
Don't know (D/K) + no answer (N/A)	11.3	(11.4)

Q: (Only for those who answered "yes" to the previous question)
What's the primary reason for your approval of the Koizumi cabinet?
Pick only one from among those listed below.

The prime minister is trustworthy
14.3 (10.7)
Because it's a coalition cabinet of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito
3.6 (3.1)
The prime minister has leadership ability
16.9 (18.1)
Something can be expected of its economic policies
4.5 (2.7)
Something can be expected of its foreign policies
1.6 (6.2)
Something can be expected of its political reforms
14.0 (10.9)
Something can be expected of its tax reforms
1.9 (1.9)
Something can be expected of its administrative reforms

TOKYO 00004830 007 OF 013

8.5 (9.5)
There's no other appropriate person (for prime minister)
32.5 (33.9)
Other answers (O/A)
0.7 (1.2)
D/K+N/A
1.5 (1.8)

Q: (Only for those who answered "no" to the first question) What's the primary reason for your disapproval of the Koizumi cabinet? Pick only one from among those listed below.

The prime minister is untrustworthy
11.9 (10.5)
Because it's a coalition cabinet of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito
2.9 (4.1)
The prime minister lacks leadership ability

2.2 (3.3)
 Nothing can be expected of its economic policies
 27.6 (18.9)
 Nothing can be expected of its foreign policies
 16.4 (18.4)
 Nothing can be expected of its political reforms
 8.6 (9.0)
 Nothing can be expected of its tax reforms
 7.8 (13.5)
 Nothing can be expected of its administrative reforms
 9.1 (8.1)
 Don't like the prime minister's personal character
 11.1 (7.4)
 O/A
 0.9 (4.5)
 D/K+N/A
 1.5 (2.3)

Q: Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited Yasukuni Shrine on Aug.
 15. What do you think about his visit to Yasukuni Shrine this time?
 Pick only one.

It's good 51.5
 He shouldn't have visited there 41.8
 D/K+N/A 6.7

Q: (Only for those who answered "it's good") Why? Pick only one.

Because he pledged to visit there on Aug. 15
 7.7
 Because it's only natural that the prime minister console the
 spirits of the war dead
 34.0
 Because shrine visits should not be affected by foreign countries

56.6
 O/A
 1.1
 D/K+N/A
 0.6

Q: (Only for those who answered "he shouldn't have visited there")
 Why? Pick only one.

Because Class-A war criminals are enshrined there 26.4

TOKYO 00004830 008 OF 013

Because the prime minister's visits to the shrine are against the
 constitutional separation of state and religion 17.0
 Because the prime minister's visits to the shrine affect friendly
 relations with China, South Korea, and other countries 55.4
 O/A 0.9
 D/K+N/A 0.3

Q: Do you think the next prime minister should visit Yasukuni
 Shrine?

Yes 39.6
 No 44.9
 D/K+N/A 15.5

Q: Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe visited Yasukuni Shrine in
 April this year. However, he has not admitted to his visit to the
 shrine, reasoning that the shrine has become a diplomatic and
 political issue. What do you think about this? Pick only one.

If that's true, he should make it public 37.8
 He doesn't have to make it public 30.3
 Can't say which 30.7
 D/K+N/A 1.2

Q: Do you think it would be better to unenshrine World War II
 Class-A war criminals from Yasukuni Shrine?

Yes 60.4
 No 28.1

D/K+N/A 11.5

Q: The late Emperor Showa (Hirohito) was displeased with the enshrinement of Class-A war criminals at Yasukuni Shrine, according to recently discovered notes. How much do you take it into consideration when thinking about the prime minister's visits to Yasukuni Shrine? Pick only one.

Very much	16.1
Somewhat	39.6
Not very much	25.8
Not at all	11.6
D/K+N/A	6.9

Q: Do you think the Liberal Democratic Party should focus on the issue of visiting Yasukuni Shrine in its upcoming presidential election?

Yes	25.5
No	67.5
D/K+N/A	7.0

Q: Which political party do you support?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	41.6	(42.7)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto)	22.8	(19.4)
New Komeito (NK)	3.0	(3.8)
Japan Communist Party (JCP)	2.7	(3.7)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto)	2.0	(2.6)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto)	0.2	(0.1)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon)	---	(0.1)
Other political parties, groups	---	(---)
None	25.2	26.3
D/K+N/A	2.5	(1.3)

TOKYO 00004830 009 OF 013

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted by Kyodo News Service over a period of two days, Aug. 15-16, on a random digit-dialing (RDD) basis. Among those randomly generated telephone numbers, those actually for household use with one or more eligible voters totaled 1,473. Answers were obtained from 1,001 persons.

(4) Discussing the 2006 LDP presidential election with Koichi Kato

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
August 22, 2006

1Q. On August 15, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited Yasukuni Shrine and your home and office were set on fire after you criticized the visit.

1A. I do not know whether the arson was committed by a group or an individual. Nevertheless, I think the incident happened in the midst of a recent mood of excessive nationalism. It has become difficult to make comments casually. However, I have no intention to change my stance.

1Q. Will you continue to voice your opinions?

1A. Yes. Although this incident happened, I think Yasukuni Shrine is a problem, so I will continue to express my thoughts.

1Q. How do you see the current situation in which Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe has overwhelming support in the LDP

SIPDIS
presidential election, even from the forces that have a different stance on Asia diplomacy.

1A. The LDP has kept its majority by gathering together wide-ranging opinions from across the spectrum. It is very much like the LDP to engage in active discussions that could divide public opinion. Therefore, I am concerned about the party leaning over to one side regarding policy matters and its impact on the future elections.

Q. In the LDP, the atmosphere makes it difficult to be "anti-Abe," right?

A. I think the LDP members are moving toward supporting Mr. Abe because they are concerned about the formation of the cabinet after the presidential election. Once the personnel appointments are over, I think the LDP members will hold discussions freely, as though they were released from some kind of spell. Depending on who becomes the secretary general, the LDP members could be treated

SIPDIS

disadvantageously when the party nominates candidates (like the time of postal election). Moreover, everyone fear somewhere in their heart that an assassin will be sent to their election districts. There are candidates who engage in policy debates even they knew they would lose in the election, but their supporters hold back. Moist firewood will not burn.

Q. What is the question that should have been asked?

A. The debate should have been about Asia diplomacy, as Japan's relations with China and South Korea have been particularly damaged by the Yasukuni issue. Mr. Koizumi's shrine visits are literary and intuitive, but Mr. Abe rejects the Tokyo Trials and is a stronger believer. The Tokyo Trials were directed by the US, so scholars can say what they wish, but the premier has to think about the impact of his comments on Japan-US relations.

TOKYO 00004830 010 OF 013

Q. How do you think Prime Minister Koizumi's six shrine visits have influenced Mr. Abe?

A. Mr. Abe may not be able to step back from the behavior of Mr. Koizumi. Essentially, Mr. Abe's statements are stronger (than Koizumi's), so I am concerned.

Q. How would you respond to Finance Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki, who was once your comrade?

A. We have similar views, so I would like him to do his best. However, in the first place, he must have the power to gather together 20 lawmaker signatures on his own. I think he can achieve that goal on his own, but I'll think about what I can do if he is just short of that number in the final stages.

Q. What is your aim for forming a study group on Asia diplomacy with former LDP Vice President Taku Yamasaki?

A. The debate on Asia diplomacy has suddenly lost momentum because of former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda's announcement that he would not run in the presidential race. I fully understand that Mr. Abe has the advantage. That is exactly why I think it is important for this country to form a group to discuss Asia diplomacy after the presidential election.

(5) DPJ's Okada restarts

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
August 22, 2006

Katsuya Okada, who suffered a crushing defeat in the general election that he campaigned for as the Minshuto (DPJ = Democratic Party of Japan) President, has been making "pilgrimages" to local regions to "recharge his batteries." Now, he restarted his activities, and he has been gaining attention inside the Minshuto. On 18 August, he began posting on his website a serial article entitled, "Five years with Koizumi politics." The articles examine the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) politics through Diet debates. He will launch today a Diet members' league on the promotion of nuclear disarmament, with a membership of approximately 40 Minshuto lawmakers. He will chair the league. As an opposition party member, he apparently plans to confront the government and ruling parties based on policy issues.

After his resignation from the party president's post, Okada has

visited about 20 prefectures. He visited the hometowns of former Diet members who lost their seats in the last general election and vowed there to make a come back. He also visited the hometowns of junior members to give advice on elections, such as guidance on street-corner speechmaking.

In the serial article "Five years with Koizumi politics," he discusses policy issues that will be taken over by the post-Koizumi administration.

Historical perceptions and Yasukuni Shrine issue are the themes of the first installment of articles. He approves to a certain degree the Prime Minister Koizumi's recognition of Class-A war criminals as war criminals during Diet deliberations. On the other hand, he is hard on the candidates who would like to succeed Koizumi. Commenting on Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe and Foreign Minister Aso,

TOKYO 00004830 011 OF 013

Okada said: "I sensed they are both sympathetic toward the Class-A criminals." Regarding Finance Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki, who has kept his comments in reserve, (Okada says): "He had an opportunity to talk about his viewpoint that is different from the other two (Abe and Aso). I was a little disappointed."

The series of article will be posted about 10 times until the day of the LDP presidential election. It is said the articles in their entirety will amount to the size of a book.

Ten DPJ members crossing generations and groups, including Upper House member Satsuki Eda, added their names to the list of promoters for the Diet members' league on promotion of nuclear disarmament. "While there are nuclear issues of North Korea and Iran, and an increasing danger of nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists, the government lacks enthusiasm for nuclear disarmament policies." His goal is to conduct a survey and research on his own. Moreover, Okada has been holding study groups with junior members to learn about the political reform after the "1955 system." He also has launched a Diet members' league supporting NGOs that provide overseas aid.

Nonetheless, since Okada strongly claims that the factions are unnecessary, not many view that he is making a "move to create an Okada faction." He has been emphasizing his do-things-my-own-way attitude to those around him, saying "I want to recharge my batteries to last the next five years."

(6) Crime syndicate smuggles in M16, AK47, grenades to arm itself with military-level weapons

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 27) (Full)
August 23, 2006

(Military weapons confiscated by police in a raid on a gang associated with the Inagawa-kai)

A number of persons, including a senior member of the Matsuda-gumi group affiliated with the Inagawa-kai crime syndicate, have been arrested on suspicion of smuggling arms into Japan. The confiscated weapons have been found out to be extremely destructive, according to the Metropolitan Police Department Organized Crime Control Bureau 4th Division, the Honjo Police Station, and other sources. The MPD is highly alarmed at crime syndicates arming themselves with "military-level weapons" that might cause, if used on streets, collateral damage against ordinary citizens. "I wonder how many weapons the crime syndicates have; they may be hiding some more," an expert said warily.

The confiscated weapons included 23 handguns, tunnel explosives, a US-made M16 automatic rifle, its grenade launcher, three grenades, and an AK47 automatic rifle. The MPD believes the automatic rifles came from persons connected with the Philippine military and other sources.

The cylindrical launcher that goes beneath the barrel must be loaded each time with a 4-centimeter-diameter grenade.

According to military commentator Kensuke Ebata, this type of equipment has been around since the Vietnam War and was used widely during the Iraq war. The automatic rifles, which have a range of 50 to 200 meters, are often used to target unarmored vehicles and

TOKYO 00004830 012 OF 013

trucks and foot soldiers and to destroy buildings to make breakthroughs.

Atsushi Mizoguchi, a nonfiction writer knowledgeable about crime syndicates, noted:

"A number of organized crime groups experienced internal dissension recently, and I think they are arming themselves with heavy arms in order to have peace of mind. Firearms from the unstable Middle East and other parts of the world may have become readily available, as their prices have collapsed."

(7) Russia fires at Japanese fishing boat in violation of secret accord with Japan on safe fishing operations

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Slightly abridged)
August 22, 2006

The governments of Japan and Russia signed an accord to ensure safe fishing operations in 2000. But the Russian Coast Border Guard disregarded this agreement and fired on a Japanese fishing boat in waters off Nemuro, Hokkaido. In the agreement, Japan promised to cooperate with Russia on its efforts to crack down on illegal fishing operations.

Proposal from Russia

Just after the Soviet Union collapsed, Russian fishing boats were often spotted illegally fishing in Russian-claimed waters. Upset by the situation, the Russian government asked Japan to cooperate with its crackdown operations.

Japan has not prepared domestic law to deal with unidentified ships intruding into its territorial waters, unlike Russia, South Korea, and China.

Under such a situation, it was impossible for Russian vessels to take action toward a Russian poaching boat that intruded into Japanese territorial waters.

The crabs and fish illegally caught by Russian fishing boats in Russian-claimed waters are brought into Japan. In order also to protect Japanese fishing boats from being shot at and seized by Russian patrol boats, the Japanese government asked the Russian government to promise not to open fire at Japanese boats in exchange for its cooperation for Russian crackdown efforts. When President Vladimir Putin visited Japan in 2000, both sides agreed that the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) and Russian border guards would not shoot at the other side's boats when such boats are captured.

To implement this agreement, both sides signed a memorandum. They reportedly decided not to sign an official document, with the aim of avoiding mutual intervention in the other side's domestic affairs.

Agreement observed

After the agreement was signed, Russia seized more than 20 Japanese vessels up until the recent shooting incident, but there were no shooting incidents reported during this period, although there were cases involving poaching boats from countries other than Japan. This means that Russia had abided by the agreement.

Japan also cooperated with Russia's crackdown efforts, with JCG

TOKYO 00004830 013 OF 013

patrol boats sending off a Russian boat that intruded into Japanese territorial waters after fleeing from Russian patrol boats' pursuit

and informing Russian authorities of its location.

Over the decade up until 2004, Russia had seized 42 Japanese fishing boats, while Japan had captured 7 Russian boats.

Black market for crabs

Crabs are not popular in Russia, so there had been few crabbers. After learning that crabs fetch a good price in Japan, however, Russian poaching boats began to appear more than 10 years ago.

In the case of Russian poaching boats, they deliver the marine products they catch directly to Japanese boats at sea. Dissatisfied with being unable to collect taxes from the Russian poaching boats, Russian authorities decided to enforce more stringent regulations.

In the days of the former Soviet Union, Japanese fishermen were allowed to catch crabs in the sea near the northern territories in return for providing the former Soviet Union with defense-related articles in Japanese newspapers, photos of JCB patrol boats, and electric appliances. Some of them are now brokers who illegally import crabs captured by Russian poachers or are still continuing illegally fishing in the Russian-claimed waters. Informed sources said that the marine products taken by such poaching boats are sold on the black market through brokers, with the proceeds going to gangsters.

In connection with the recent shooting, the Russian government has claimed that the Japanese government has not taken satisfactory measures to prevent illegal fishing. Some observers view the incident as part of Russia's efforts to secure foreign currency by tightening anti-poaching measures.

As part of efforts to prevent a similar incident, the Japanese government is likely to discuss how to treat the agreement on safe fishing operations with the Russian side through unofficial routes.

DONOVAN